

# **CORRECTED**

## **MINUTES**

**Quarterly Meeting of the  
MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION  
Held, pursuant to notice  
Tuesday, December 21, 2004 — 2:00 PM  
Missouri Veterans Commission Headquarters  
1719 Southridge Drive  
Jefferson City, Missouri**

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

- A. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call  
In attendance: **Chairman Emmett Fairfax; Vice Chairman Carson Ross; Member Bernadette Miller; Member Carl Niewoehner;**  
Absent: **Member General Arvid West**
- C. Introductions  
Guests and staff present.
  - 1. Guest: **Jim Whitfield**, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **Col. Wayne Medley**, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **David Shafer**, Dept. Commander American Legion; **Lynn Dorrell**, Adjutant American Legion; **Gary Campbell**, Director VAMC Columbia; **James Ernie Lee**, President MAVO; **Jim Lanigen**, VAMC Kansas City; **Ralph Skelly**, Military Order Purple Heart; **Jack Matthews**, President MVC Foundation, Inc.; **Representative Bill Ransdall**, District 148
  - 2. Staff: **Ronald Taylor**, Executive Director; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary; **Sharon Keith**, Director, Service to Veterans Program; **Hal Dulle**, Deputy Director; **Jess Rasmussen**, Director Higginsville Cemetery; **Anne Payne**, Superintendent of Homes; **Tim Norton**, Director of Planning and Property Management; **Stan Baughn**, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness Program; **Pat Rowe Kerr**, Veterans Benefits Awareness Coordinator
- D. Approval of November 4, 2004 Commission Meeting Minutes. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as recorded.

## II. OLD BUSINESS:

### Management Report: Executive Director Comments: Ronald Taylor

**Commission Update** – Ron Taylor reported the Governor’s budget recommendations may not be sent until after January 10<sup>th</sup>.

A new Department of Public Safety Director and Governor’s Legal Counsel for the Commission has not yet been named.

A Study Group has been established to look at potential use of the Commissions 117 acres of land at Lexington and plan for its future. Hal Dulle, Deputy Director, Representative Bill Ransdall, Chuck Wooten, Springfield Cemetery, and Jess Rasmussen, Director Higginsville Cemetery will serve on the study group. Representative Ransdall will join the Commission as the Planning and Liaison Coordinator for the Ft. Leonard Wood Veterans Cemetery effective January 1<sup>st</sup>. His duties will include working with the Military and the VA.

The President has signed HR3936 which has considerable impact on the Missouri Veterans Commission. Mr. Taylor noted two real implications which include:

- 1) provides a matching grant program for hiring and retention of nursing staff to reduce nursing shortages at the Homes: payments to assist States. The amount of the payment to a State for any fiscal year is the amount equal to 2 percent of the per diem payments estimated to be made to that State, for that States homes.
- 2) Treatment of VA per diem payments to State Homes for veterans for Medicaid: Payments to States shall not be considered a liability of third party, or otherwise be used to offset or reduce any other payment made to assist veterans. Currently of the 46 states with Homes, 23 states are established to qualify for Medicaid. Most where done in the late 80’s or early 90’s when it was possible for a veteran to draw both a VA pension and to qualify for Medicaid payments. Also it was a time when interpretations from Medicaid allowed them to receive for the same veteran in the same Medicaid bed the VA per diem plus a Medicaid payment that did not count that per diem or third party payment. In the early 90’s changes Congress passed a bill that if a veteran went into a Medicaid bed and no dependents his benefits where cut from \$1,000 plus per month to \$90 per month. Around that time Medicaid said

that you couldn't draw both per diem payment and the full Medicaid payment. Today the maximum Medicaid payment in Missouri is \$116 per day. If we were receiving \$59 per day the maximum Medicaid would be responsible for would be \$116 minus the \$59 plus other income. Earlier with these restrictions there were no benefits to MVC or the State of Missouri to becoming Medicaid qualified. HR3936 changes the interpretation on the VA per diem, effective November 30<sup>th</sup> state Veterans Homes that are Medicaid approved could draw \$59 per day and Medicaid could not count that as a third party payment. In theory if the veteran has no other income a Veteran Home can draw \$59 per day plus \$116 per day. There would be a considerable impact on administrative costs in switching over to a Medicaid system, additional billing and tracking would be required and another layer of inspections and surveys added to our system. Additional staff to Medicaid as well to handle these procedures. Also a considerable loss in VA pension benefits. If Missouri decided to switch it would require changing the resident rate to Medicaid rate of approximately \$3,500 per month.

Ron Taylor advised that an internal task force from both the Homes and Benefits Programs has been established to look at regulatory and financial issues over the next few months and try to determine if switch to Medicaid is beneficial. A report will be presented to the Commissioners when completed.

A survey of resident charges from surrounding states was distributed to the Commissioners. According to the survey Missouri has the second lowest rate in resident rates with Illinois being lowest but is a higher tax state. Of these surrounding states from the survey, Iowa is the only Medicaid approved state. Kentucky, Tennessee and Indiana are looking at the switch as well.

A State Audit was released in September "Containing Cost in the States Medicaid Program for Claims Paid for Veterans". The audit recommendations suggest that Missouri could potentially save millions of dollars of state funds by assisting low-income veterans to obtain their medical services from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) rather than through the state Medicaid program. The audit also recommends a joint program between the Missouri Veterans Commission, Department of Social Services and the Department of Health and Senior Services develop an economical and effective procedure to distribute VA supplied medications to veterans residing in nursing homes.

Ron Taylor advised to keep an eye on the Governor elect Blunt's first official action which is likely to be an executive order on collective bargaining which will cancel the executive order of two years ago. He stated we have not received much indication of what this really means for the existing grievance procedure and what the implications may be for the system that has been in place the past year and half. As MVC learns more about it the Commissioners will be updated.

Commissioner Niewoehner read an article on the rising cost of prescriptions. The article states that the cost for Medicaid drugs now exceeds the spending for Higher Education. He noted VA prescription drugs went up 12% last year at our Homes. Commissioner Niewoehner asked Mr. Taylor what MVC's budget request included. Mr. Taylor stated MVC requested the minimum needed to continue to operate and for the Homes Program asked for full staffing to operate at the current levels now and for an increase in staff enough to handle the acuity of care based on applications rather than admissions, which means we are asking for 128 additional staff that will allow us to admit many more level 3's rather (based on demand) than having to limit those to admit level 1's. This consists of more than 2 ½ million dollars total. Mr. Niewoehner noted his concerns with MVC getting full funding to staff the Homes and to keep the staff, nursing salaries and shift differentials.

#### Missouri Veterans Homes: Anne Payne, Superintendent of Homes

**Homes Program** – Anne Payne reported the census of Homes Program to the Commissioners. The three 150 bed facilities are operating at full capacity. The two oldest 200 bed facilities in Warrensburg and Cameron are operating in the 170's in terms of census which means about 85% and cannot admit new patients due to staffing. Two facilities where we have added 100 beds this year we currently are adding approximately 10 veterans per month. St. Louis currently has 213 residents and Mt. Vernon has 133 and anticipates that Mt. Vernon will be up to 170 by the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. Payne stated MVC does have challenges in the Homes Program referring to the needed additional budget to be able to compete in the health care market and get staff needed to provide for our veterans. In the last few months the recruitment rates have been raised for licensed staff at some of the facilities one of those being the St. Louis Home. Ms. Payne was happy to report they have had a lot of success in recruiting the last couple of months in that area. She stated despite the competition, MVC does offer a nice work environment and MVC has a wonderful population to care for, she added however due to the current budget situation this is only a temporary solution and that we will have to be aggressive in the upcoming session to really justify our needs.

Over the past three months the Homes Program has developed an innovation circle which consists of representatives from each of the seven homes to talk about how could we use this existing staffing resource we have in the nursing department and maximize the use of that resource. Ms. Payne stated basically all of MVC homes right now operate on a every other weekend off, traditional 8 hour shift but feels this does not maximize the use of your resources so through the innovation circle they will look at alternate models that include different numbers of hours for shifts: 10, 12, 14 or 16 hours based on employee choice and doing premium pay for some of those shifts on weekends or extended shifts. These type of things will be considered in the model and begin piloting that in February in a couple of the Homes to test and see the results we get. She noted there will not be an immediate impact and is contingent on the people who are in our force opting into some of those alternative schedules. Ms. Payne stated they will still have to be able to cover all of the shifts at the level needed in order to meet the acuity needs and that if we truly want to serve those 1,117 veterans on the waiting list as of December 21<sup>st</sup> we need to really justify our needs.

Commissioner Niewoehner asked Ms. Payne what the distribution of the Homes Program preliminary draft request for new funding needs. Mr. Taylor advised that the report had been distributed to key individuals in Budget & Planning and will be distributed to both Budget Committees. Mr. Niewoehner also inquired about the starting salary range for RN's. Due to the range levels that estimate was not available, however he noted from an ad in the St. Louis Post Dispatch current starting salary for RN in St. Louis is between \$14 to \$18 per hour, this is more than MVC is paying. Mr. Niewoehner stated at both hospitals and nursing homes it is projected that nurses are getting increases in salary 3% the next three years.

David Shaffer, Department Commander American Legion, stated Fort Leonard Wood Hospital is experiencing the same similar nursing shortage issues due to both salary and working conditions.

Commissioner Niewoehner questioned the organizational chart for the Missouri Veterans Commission and the relationship with the legislators after much discussion, Chairman Fairfax advised this is why it is important to attend the Joint Committee Meeting and to also meet with Budget Committees to discuss these issues and to meet with Federal and State level legislators. Vice Chairman Ross also noted that the Commissioners need to meet with their district Senator and Representative to inform them of MVC's needs.

Construction Update: Tim Norton, Director of Properties

**Construction Update** – Tim Norton reported on construction updates. He advised that MVC is currently working with the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers on a contract for the completion of a UXO, EBS and other studies required for transfer of the property to the Missouri Veterans Commission. It is anticipated that the study will start at the end of January 2005. Once the report has been completed MVC would have the paper work needed for the state to then transfer the property to Missouri Veterans Commission. Once the state appropriation is approved we will proceed with design of the project.

The final program grant review for St. Louis dementia wing is scheduled for January 19<sup>th</sup>.

Warrensburg sewer grinder pump project awarded and contractor is waiting on delivery (4 to 6 weeks delivery) of the grinder pump.

Warrensburg boiler repairs should be complete by December 22, 2004.

St. James Veterans Home, dementia dining/activity room project is nearing completion and currently have the initial punch list scheduled for January 6, 2005. Anticipate residents being able to use the addition by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Cape Girardeau, HAVC project and the St. Louis roof replacement project both are about on the same time line. Final design for St. Louis has been submitted and for Cape Girardeau the final design will be submitted by January 17<sup>th</sup>. As soon as VA comments have been received we will incorporate those and go out for bid by February 2005. Both projects should be awarded by mid March.

Springfield Veterans Cemetery columbarium wall project the consultant should have the drawings to us by the first of the year and they will be sent to VA to review. Anticipate going out for bid by January/February 2005.

Bloomfield Veterans Cemetery upgrades to the committal shelter floor, additional section of street and upgrades to wash bay have been completed. December 16<sup>th</sup> a punch list was completed and only remaining item is the test results on the strength of the concrete street.

Jacksonville Veterans Cemetery spillway upgrade project has been extended to contract until April 22<sup>nd</sup> to complete due to weather delays.

Warrensburg kitchen floor replacement project is back on track. A pre-bid is scheduled for December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Bid opening is scheduled for January 13<sup>th</sup>. Estimated time for contract to be awarded and contractor completing submission of all bonding, insurance, etc. is the first part of March 2005.

Commissioner Niewoehner questioned if there is enough funds available to complete all the projects listed. Mr. Norton advised that there is enough money for all projects except the Fort Leonard Wood project. This has a current budget request, which, if approved would be available next July in the amount of \$1 million from state funding and the remaining would come from federal funding. In addition to the previous request for funding of the HVAC project we are asking for an additional \$850,000 due to required upgrade in the sprinkling system for the Cape Girardeau Home. Mr. Norton noted that Design and Construction has voiced their concerns about the VCCITF. Mr. Taylor noted a supplemental budget request has been submitted which involves approximately a three million dollar fund switch from GR to make up for the shortfall. Commissioner Niewoehner expressed his concerns regarding the VCCITF.

Service to Veterans Program: Sharon Keith, Director, Service to Veterans Program

**Service to Veterans** – Sharon Keith reported business as usual and the need for the additional service officers. They are currently working on getting two new service officers trained in Southwest Missouri. She stated it takes 1 ½ to 2 years to get service officers fully trained. Mr. Taylor noted that 6 additional officers and some additional clerical workers have been requested for the STV Program. Mr. Taylor also noted the Commissions budget focus is not only on need for staffing at the Homes, but also to fully funding STV staff and maintenance of the trust fund. Hal Dulle and Commissioner Ross met with legislators to discuss these issues.

Between the STV program and VSO Grant Program the state of Missouri is spending about \$2.2 million in a year in order to help bring in \$550 million. Commissioner Niewoehner questioned when the STV officers last received a raise. Ms. Keith stated the officers received \$100 across the board increase in July, 2004. Mr. Taylor noted the STV officers received a repositioning increase in the previous year. Commissioner Niewoehner questioned the total budget for STV Program. Mr. Taylor state it is approximately \$1.6 million. Per Commissioner Niewoehner request regarding statistics Mr. Taylor advised that the STV program saw approximately 40,000 veterans this past year and filed at least 6,000 new claims last year and approximately 8,000 to 10,000 claims are handled per year. Statistics from Washington on claims filed on the state of Missouri that is running approximately 40,000 a year, it has increased the past few years from about 30,000. Over 20% of those claims were done by the

Missouri Veterans Commission, DAV about 20% or more, VFW 20% and the other drop to 5% or less.

MVC should be receiving statistics on the increase in claims from VA shortly after the first of the year.

#### Cemeteries Update: Jess Rasmussen, Director Higginsville Cemetery

**Cemetery Program** – Jess Rasmussen reported to the Commissioners that he and other cemetery staff attended Memorial Services Network conference last week in Indianapolis. Higginsville and Springfield will be inspected by the National Cemetery Administrative in October 2005. Jacksonville and Bloomfield are being considered for inspection in 2006. This inspection will be done every three years. We have received the newest guidelines for NCA's measures and standards. Mr. Rasmussen advised the VA grades their cemeteries individually with the highest grade being National Shrine status. The VA is working on the National Cemeteries to bring all of them up to that level. He stated the cemetery staff has a goal to meet NCA's standards for national shrine status and he believes we are very close to that now.

The Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration has its own training program and things that MVC is required to participate in but we have never been able to get formal training. The NCA has established a National Training Center at Jefferson Barracks and we have been offered an opportunity to participate in their training programs on a space available basis. In return MVC will be host to NCA's Cemetery Director interns as they do field studies. He believes this will allow MVC to create relationships that will also help in the long run to create an informed partnership for programs and policies.

The National Funeral Consumers Protection Alliance has questioned Missouri law requiring the presence of a funeral director during the interment of a body. This is a result of a complaint because we told an individual that we require the presence of a funeral director at our veterans' cemeteries. The Federal Trade Commission rules on funerals clearly state that use of a funeral home or its services is not required. We are requesting a ruling on this by the State Attorney General.

An accident happened at the Higginsville Cemetery recently. An employee accidentally cut his wrist with a knife he was using to open a plastic bucket. The employee was life-flighted to a Kansas City hospital for treatment. Ron Taylor added that due to the efforts of Jess Rasmussen and David Smith, Maintenance Supervisor they saved the employees life.

Current interment and pre-certification statistics: 2,591 interments and 9,877 pre-certifications.



Vice-Chairman Ross questioned Jacksonville Cemetery numbers being lower. Mr. Rasmussen stated that due to its difficult location outreach efforts are continuing in that area with paid advertising, meetings with organizations and groups.

Vice-Chairman Ross noted his concerns with the Swan Lake Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Grain Valley/Blue Springs, Missouri. On Veterans Day Vice-Chairman Ross was guest speaker to a middle school in Blue Springs. He and two other representatives from the American Legion Post 499 in which he is a member of presented a new flag to the school. One of those representatives was Robert Boyles, Funeral Director at Swan Lake and he told Vice-Chairman Ross that he was taken back by the comments made in the KC star article. He asked Vice-Chairman Ross to call him. During their telephone conversation Vice-Chairman Ross asked him to attend MVC Commission Meeting in January and make his case to the Commission on their advertising methods. Vice-Chairman Ross stated that he heard Mr. Ball report at another occasion that they had spent \$1.3 million in advertising in the KC Star and that they were going to pull their advertising. He and Hal Dulle recently visited the cemetery and there is no comparison to Missouri Veterans Commission cemeteries. Mr. Dulle has spoken to the Attorney General's Office and they have made some inquiries and have found that Swan Lake's advertising are within state law however the Commission has forced them to change their advertising practices of the facility. The Attorney General's Office will continue the monitoring of the Swan Lake advertising.

Commissioner Niewoehner stated he has received calls concerning the Jacksonville Veterans Cemetery. Veterans were given bad information on eligibility for the Veterans Cemetery. Commissioner Niewoehner expressed his concerns of whose responsibility it is for disseminating the Commissions brochures to the service organizations service officers. He stated the Service Officers don't have this information. Mr. Taylor advised that they have encouraged the agencies to request the brochures from the office. He noted staff will look into this situation.

#### VSO Grants: Hal Dulle, Deputy Director

**VSO Grant Program-** Hal Dulle had no new updated information to provide. He noted as total of \$750,000 was available this year for VSO Grants. There are a few additional funds remaining and we are working with the Purple Heart Organization relative to their Service Officer Program here in Missouri. That issue has not been resolved to date.

Hal Dulle is trying to set up a meeting with the Service Organizations to measure increased activity as well as in claims. Commissioner

Niewoehner requested a report with the number of \$ awarded and how many claims each organization has filed, and that he is interested in knowing how much it cost to file a claim. Mr. Taylor stated Form 5's are included in the budget request and a report with the breakdown will be distributed at the next commission meeting.

Veterans Benefits Awareness Program: Stan Baughn, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness

**Benefits Supermarkets** – Stan Baughn reported no new activity since the last meeting. The toll free line calls have been dropping off due to no advertising of Supermarkets recently and 7 Supermarkets are firm for 2005.

Outreach: Pat Rowe Kerr, Veterans Benefits Awareness Coordinator

**Outreach** – Pat Rowe Kerr reported 10,369 folks from OEF, OIF and Noble Eagle that have combat wounds. According to the Surgeon General across the US there are 4,808 in med-hold as of December 17<sup>th</sup>. Missouri currently has 106 in med-holds across the US. Another 10,000 have been injured or suffered illness while deployed.

DOD and VA have entered into a partnership agreement allowing folks to file for VA benefits six months before receiving their DD214. These are added folks coming into the system that increases the STV Program workloads.

She attended “Road to Recovery” Conference in Florida where spent time networking with DOD, VA and other organizations are supporting the OEF, OIF and Noble Eagle folks. Attending were 150 wounded soldiers and their families.

Pat Kerr and Stan Baughn visited the Hospital in Fort Leonard Wood meeting with med-hold staff and promoting veterans benefits awareness. They will continue to visit on an every other month basis.

She noted she is also working on a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder summit that will work with the National Guard in April-May. Dr Kudler from VISN 6 spoke about PTSD impact on our service men and women at the “Road to Recovery” Conference in Florida.

Gary Campbell, Director VAMC Columbia thanked the Commission for their efforts in filling the gaps.

Missouri has had 10,800 total deployments to date. 9,500 are from the Missouri National Guard which states many are going out for a second or third time. These totals do not include the 2,000 Reservists sent out.

### **III. NEW BUSINESS:**

Hal Dulle reported to the Commissioners that MVC will be tracking bills on veterans' issues and sending out a weekly report to the Commissioners. Four bills have currently been introduced:

- 1) SB18 (Coleman) Exempts military pensions from state income tax;
- 2) SB13 (Kennedy) Authorizes tax check-off for contributions to Missouri Military Relief Fund;
- 3) SB121 (Bray) Requires safe staffing & quality care in all veterans home a& mental health facilities;
- 4) SB66 (Coleman) Establishes a tuition grant program for children of deceased military members.

Hal Dulle thanked MAVO for their support of the recommendations of the interim committee regarding the VCCITF, staffing of the Homes.

Hal Dulle thanked Gary Campbell for the tour of the facility and would hope that he would extend an invitation to MAVO so that they may see the progress the VAMC has done. Gary Campbell stated that MAVO is welcome to visit.

Commissioner Niewoehner read in a recent article from the December Legionnaire that MAVO has approved all of the Joint Interim Committee recommendations. Commissioner Niewoehner expressed his concern of the revision of Chapter 42 and that he does not approve of any changes and he advised that he wrote a letter to Representative Chuck Graham and Representative Jeff Harris concerning this matter. Commissioner Niewoehner stated he feels it's the responsibility of the federal government to take care of the service members and not the Commission and that he plans to testify at all hearings regarding this issue. Commissioner Niewoehner requested that his letter be an attachment to the meeting minutes.

Jack Matthews, President MVC Foundation, Inc. had no items to report to the Commission. The Commissioners thanked the Foundation for everything they do.

Ron Taylor advised that people from the Bloomfield area approached him recently stating that if the Commission is interested in acquiring the additional 20 to 30 acres of county land immediately adjacent to the

Bloomfield Veterans Cemetery that this is the time to raise that issue. Currently MVC staff has been maintaining the grounds. With Commission approval the Commission would like to pursue the possibility of that land being donated by the county. Vice-Chairman Ross made a motion to for the staff to proceed in obtaining the donated land. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. By a voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Ron Taylor advised the Commissioners that the \$1 million video project has caused some concerns from some Legislators with regards to the time frame it is taking to complete. He advised that we need to get an RFP out soon. MVC worked with Budget & Planning and others on this project. MVC looked into what MVC's latitude was in this matter and we do not have any latitude. The use of the money cannot be used toward staff time on the project because of the way it is in the budget bill a line item MVC cannot flex the money between E&E and personal service. Over the last few months MVC has looked at what benefit we could out of this, one featuring our residents at the Homes which will give up the opportunity to use as an educational tool and a way of raising the Commissions visibility. With that in mind we have finished an RFP they did a pre-bid the proposals have to be responded to by mid January. He stated that obviously given the time frame nothing like \$1 million is going to be spent this year and the unused money will to the best of our knowledge will either lapse June 30, 2005 or go to other agencies. Commissioner Niewoehner noted that he is not in favor of this project. David Shafer, Dept. Commander American Legion stated his background is in multi media development and he advised the state is being charged too much for this project. He suggested utilizing in house resources such as universities and agencies and he also noted that video type projects VHS/DVD are soon to be obsolete. Mr. Taylor stated that if the money was in the Veterans Historical & Educational Trust Fund created last session then MVC would have the authority to determine the most effective means of using it and could develop a program internal or external do so; however the money is not in this fund. The \$1 million is a line item appropriation which says it will be used for this purpose and after speaking to Budget & Planning and the others the Legislators gave it to MVC for that purpose and the Governor signed it for that purpose and MVC does not have the authority to decide to use elsewhere. Representative Ransdall noted he opposed this bill and also stated that the University has expressed interest in doing this project and proposed to do for a lot less money through their program. He stated he does believe that perhaps the legislators could re-appropriate the money or take lapse funds rather than lapse back into GR. Hal Dulle will check into this matter regarding the re-appropriate of lapse funds and see about repositioning the fund once session begins. Mr. Taylor stated that there will be multiple bidders which hopes that this will

keep the cost down and then possibly re-appropriating the remaining money into the Commission fund.

Ernie Lee, President MAVO informed the Commissioners of the events taking place during Veterans Appreciation Day on January 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>.

January 24<sup>th</sup>

7:00 pm Legislative Reception, VFW Post 1003

January 25<sup>th</sup>

8-10 am Legislative Reception, Capitol Rotunda

1:30 pm MAVO Meeting, Rm. 470 GOB

5:00 pm Joint Committee Meeting, Capitol Building

Mr. Lee advised that MAVO supports the Commissions priority issues concerning the VCCITF, Homes Funding, STV Program. He also noted MAVO's endorsement on the tax exemption of military retiree pay.

Gary Campbell, Director VAMC Columbia informed the Commissioners of the proposed CBOC for Jefferson City it has been approved by the local Department of Medicines and Surgery in Washington and is on its way to the Secretary office for approval, however he has learned that it is 1 of about 25 CBOC's across the nation that has been recommend for approval because of the budget being so bad this year there is debate whether or not VA should go ahead with any of these clinics. He will keep the Commission informed on this matter.

Mr. Campbell also informed the Commissioners that the Columbia Hospital and others in VISN 15 underwent the three year cycle of accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals Organizations and all the hospitals did exceptionally good. Vice-Chairman Ross asked Gary Campbell and Jim Lanigen, VAMC Kansas City if the Commission could supply the Hospitals with brochures that could be set out in waiting areas for veterans. They stated they would have staff distribute the information.

Representatives from the service organizations will distribute flyers out to Posts to place on their bulletin boards.

Hal Dulle advised the Commissioners that he met with key leaders from MAVO to discuss legislative challenges for the following year and also some of the challenges that some of the veterans will face in the future. They will try to identify these Missouri veterans in the future and how we can best handle through the Veteran Service Organizations, the Commission and on the federal level and try to meeting on a regular basis to discuss all the current issues and address them.

Hal Dulle stated MVC has advertised for the Minority Veterans Benefits Coordinator for which funding was received last year and to date approximately 60 applications have been received.

Pat Rowe Kerr shared with the Commissioners that she has been involved in doing an assessment on other states of how they are supporting their Guard and Reservists on gap issues. She will provide a report once that has been completed.

Hal Dulle informed the Commissioners that the Legislative Tour was held at the St. Louis Veterans Home on December 14 with a power point presentation and Bloomfield Veterans Cemetery on December 15<sup>th</sup>.

A schedule of events for Veterans Appreciation Day will be emailed to the Commissioners.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next Commission meeting will be held January 25, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. "Veterans Appreciation Day" at the Capitol Building. The location to be announced at a later date.

The Commission closed the meeting to conduct an executive session for the purpose to discuss personnel matters held in pursuant to Section 610.021, Subsection (3) RSMo.

The meeting was reopened and with no further business before the Commission the meeting was adjourned.



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Ronald L. Taylor, Secretary